

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 MC-01 PM-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 580

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1282

LIMDIS

EO 11652: XGDS4

TAGS: ETRS ES US

SUBJ: MUNITIONS CONTROL LICENSE APPLICATION: CASE NO. 10629 POMA

REF: STATE 38929

1. DAO CHECKED WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON GOES IMPORT PERMIT FOR SUBJECT CASE AND SPECIFICALLY RAISED CONCERNS EXPRESSED PARA.

2. REFTEL. MINISTER OF DEFENSE STATED THAT THEY HAD CONSIDERED THE USEFULNESS OF THE WEAPON TO TERRORIST GROUPS IN RULING ON THE APPLICATION AND HAD RESOLVED QUESTION IN FAVOR OF ISSUING PERMIT TO THE POMAS. MINISTER SAID THEY HAD INVESTIGATED POMA SECURITY FORCE AND CONSIDERED IT PROFESSIONAL AND UNDER FIRM CONTROL.

2. INFORMATION IN PARA. 3-6 BELOW OBTAINED FROM ROBERTO POMA ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS. IT SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE USED OUTSIDE USG.

3. WEAPONS IN QUESTION ARE INTENDED FOR PERSONAL BODYGUARD FORCE OF POMA FAMILY. ALL MEMBERS OF FAMILY ARE PROTECTED AT ALL TIMES. A TOTAL OF 32 BODYGUARDS ARE EMPLOYED. BODYGUARDS ARE FOR MOST PART RETIRED NATIONAL GUARD PERSONNEL, USUALLY OLDER MEN, WHOM POMAS CONSIDER MORE TRUSTWORTHY THAN YOUNGER MEN, WHO MIGHT BE MORE USEFUL IN A FIGHT. BODYGUARDS' SALARY, PLUS IN MOST CASES PENSIONS, PROVIDES THEM WITH VERY GOOD INCOME BY SALVADORAN
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STANDARDS (COLONES 350 -650 PER MONTH). POMAS ALSO PROVIDE

STANDARD SOCIAL BENEFITS PLUS FOOD AND, IN SOME CASES, LODGING. ALL BODYGUARDS HAVE \$20,000 LIFE INSURANCE POLICY. POMAS BELIEVE GENEROUS PAY SCALE AND BENEFITS REDUCE LIKLIHOOD OF GUARDS BEING SUBVERTED.

4. POMAS ALSO RETAIN 2 MEN WHOSE FUNCTION IS TO MAINTAIN CONSTANT CLANDESTINE SURVEILLANCE OF GUARD FORCE. POMAS RECIEVE WEEKLY REPORT ON ACTIVITIES, ASSOCIATIONS AND HABITS OF GUARD FORCE.

5. MAC 10'S WOULD BE INPOSSESSION OF GUARDS ONLY WHEN THEY ARE ON DUTY. AT OTHER TIMES, THEY WOULD BE KEPT IN HOUSES OF POMA FAMILY MEMBERS. GUARDS NOW CARRY SIDEARMS, FOR MOST PART .38 CAL. REVOLVERS POMAS FEEL THEY ARE UNDERARMED AND COMMENTED ONE GUARD HAS ONLY .22 CAL. PISTOL. INVENTORY IS KEPT OF ALL WEAPONS, WHICH GUARDS MUST ACCOUNT FOR ON DAILY BASIS. POMAS CLAIM TO HAVE LOST ONLY ONE WEAPON IN 5 YEARS, A .38 CAL. PISTOL LOST BY GUARD WHEN HE WAS INJURED IN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT.

6. POMAS BELIEVE THEY ARE HIGH ON LIST OF POTENTIAL TARGETS FOR TERRORIST ATTACK. THEY POINT OUT THAT PROMINENT RECENT KIDNAP VICTIMS (DE SOLA AND SOL) WERE POORLY PROTECTED. THEY ARE DETERMINED NOT TO BE TAKEN AND HOPE THEIR EXTENSIVE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WILL DETER POTENTIAL ATTACKERS. FYI. EMBASSY COMMENT: IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE POMAS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COME UP WITH CASH FOR RANSOM ON SCALE OF THAT DEMANDED FOR DE SOLA AND SOL. END FYI.

7. EMBASSY UNABLE TO EXPLAIN DISCRENANCY BETWEEN APPLICATION AND ACCOMPANYING LETTER DESCRIBED PARA 1 REFTEL. AS REPORTED EARLIER, ALL WEAPONS IMPORTED INTO EL SALVADOR MUST BE APPROVED BY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. WEAPONS MUST ALSO BE REGISTERED WITH MINISTRY.

8. ROBERTO POMA WILL TRAVEL TO U.S. WEEK OF APROL 11 AND WOULD APPRECIATE DECISION ON APPLICATION BY THEN, IF POSSIBLE. HE WISHES ACCEPT DELIVERY OF WEAPONS AND BRING THEM TO EL SALVADOR PERSONALLY. HE BELIEVES THIS ASSURES GREATER SECURITY. CAMPBELL

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